



Leading Quality Addiction Treatment in the Northern Rockies

EXHIBIT 9
DATE 3/11/11
NO. HB 161

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF HB 161

Mona L. Sumner, MHA, ACATA
Chief Operations Officer

In passing the public referendum to allow medical marijuana, Montanans experienced the "law of unintended consequences". Today, we are confronted with only the beginning of the problems associated with the legalization of this drug. Already we have scientific data from the national center for substance abuse that indicates in those states where medical marijuana has been legalized; there is a corresponding increase in the use of this drug by adolescents. We note that in our own data base, the use of and choice of marijuana as a drug among at risk youth now surpasses alcohol and this is a trend only over the past two years. Make no mistake about it, marijuana is a very addictive drug—today's pot is 25% stronger and more addictive than the pot of the 60's and baby-boomer generation. And please do not be misled by thinking because these new pot businesses are limited to ages 21 and over, our kids are safe. Medical marijuana has made this drug more accessible to our young people and they are increasingly using it.

Why are we so opposed to simply regulating this as a new industry, and collecting tax revenue from it, etc? Because we don't believe you **can** regulate it! When over 27,000 people [and this number is growing] are using this drug, you have potentially put 27,000 new impaired drivers on our roads and this at a time when we are trying to stop drunk drivers! How successful have we been at that? In spite of "regulation", we continue to have drunk drivers and related deaths. And, unfortunately, we don't have a field sobriety test of any real merit for folks who are under the influence of marijuana. Ask your law enforcement agencies how effectively they think they can enforce more laws and the traffic around this drug. We think you will find this is a job they don't want and one they don't deserve to inherit simply because we see more tax revenue coming from it.

Finally, there is no question that marijuana is a gateway drug...after over 42 years treating adolescents in trouble with substances, we have yet to find one that did not begin their drug use with pot. You are no doubt hearing about the beneficial effects from this drug for pain, etc. Please realize that the benefit from marijuana, in treating pain, is from the cannabinoids, not the mood altering thc. There are currently drugs made from these cannabinoids such as marinol and others that are available to pain patients. These oral medications have been available for some time but are seldom prescribed. Why? Because they don't work as well as other pain medications but they are available without legalizing the growing and smoking of marijuana.

Finally, please understand that in sanctioning this drug, we will see a corresponding attitude shift toward it -that it must not be a particularly dangerous drug and therefore must be okay. That, believe it or not, is how kids will and are seeing it and that is what we cannot afford!

PLEASE REPEAL THIS LAW OF UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES!

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